

The Tribes of Albania and Montenegro

the Gruda church was built three hundred and eighty years ago, soon ⁶¹⁹
after their arrival. This dates their settlement at the beginning of the ⁶¹⁴
sixteenth century—that is, after the Turks had annexed Bosnia-¹⁶⁷
Herzegovina.

The Djell and Berisha stocks are intermarriageable. About half ⁵⁸²
the tribe was Catholic and half Moslem. It is now scattered and partly ⁷⁷⁹
destroyed. The Powers awarded it to Montenegro in 1913 as a war ⁷²⁷



FIG. 1.—SKETCH MAP OF ALBANIAN TRIBES IN 1913

prize in spite of the prayers of the people. It was devastated and many
refugees fled to Scutari. Again, after the Great War, it was badly ⁷⁹⁸
handled by the incoming Serbs, who were active against Moslem and ⁷²⁷
Catholic alike. They even tore the rings from the hands of a poor old
lady whose only crime was that she was Catholic. I saw many hapless
refugees in Scutari in 1921, but was powerless to help them. As in the
days of the Turk, a new foe was forcing a shifting of the peoples.

Epirus



HE southern part of the Kingdom of Albania of today was the ancient Epirus. This territory was bounded on the north by the Ionian Sea and on the south by the Ambracian Gulf. Its landward sides were next to Illyria, Macedonia and Thessaly. The terrain is essentially mountainous. About the fourth century before Christ these Epirotes were divided in fourteen tribes. Epirus at this time exerted no small influence on Thessaly through the oracle of Dodona. Historically, the part of Epirus was passive. Epirus was divided into the smaller kingdoms of Molossia, Thesprotia, Chaonia, etc., which were formed into an Epirotic League.

The chieftains of Molossia, who dominated all Epirus, claimed to be descended from Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, who settled in the country after the fall of Troy. (Plutarch also relates that Achilles was known in this country under the name of "Aspetos" which in Albanian means "swift.") Upon Pyrrhus' death his kingdom was transmitted to Molossus, his son by Andromache. 13

Physical Features



ALBANIA, situated on the east coast of 131 the Adriatic Sea, southwest of Yugoslavia and north of Greece, two and a half hours distance from Rome by aeroplane, has an area of about 11,000 square miles (approximately the size of Belgium). The larger part of the country is mountainous; amongst the geographical and geological divisions of the country the most familiar are roughly as follows: Northern Albania consisting principally of mountains; Central Albania, between the Mati and the Viosa rivers, is comprised of littoral plains; Southern Albania is mountainous to the greater extent. 133 •

From this simple picture we see that Albania consists of a marginal lowland, crossed by powerful perennial streams, and a mountainous hinterland which encloses small fertile basins. The Albanian Alps in the north consist mostly of massive limestones rising to a height of 6,500 to 8,500 feet. Scattered among these ranges are the rich summer pas-

ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

- 133 tures, especially around Lake Scutari, also the lower slopes are used by the herdsmen.

The sea-shore is almost entirely flat and sandy; only in its southern regions limestone rocks, approaching the sea and combining their picturesque contours with the lavish beauty of the vegetation, create scenery of the highest charm and attraction. These mountains cease abruptly at about thirty miles from the sea-shore and become undulating hills which are used for farm lands. A large plain in a more south-westerly direction is called the "Plains of Myzeqeja." To the southward again appear the higher ranges and limestone is mingled with sandstone. These belts are heavily wooded and above the timberline are the usual high pastures. In the extreme east are three parallel mountain belts divided by the Black Drin river.

The main rivers in Albania are the Lower Drin flowing west to east, the Black Drin flowing northwards, the White Drin enters Albania from Yugoslavia and flows southwards to the Adriatic, gradually increased by the tributaries from the Albanian Alps. Other rivers are the Semeni, Viosa,

PHYSICAL FEATURES

- 133 Bojana, Shkumbi, Osumi and Devolli. Of the many lakes in Albania the Scutari with a surface of 137 square miles and Ochrida, with 104 square miles, are the largest with that of Prespa, 131 square miles, and Malik, covering 20,000 acres, next in size. The more important ranges are the Pindus mountains and the Gramos range in the southeast. In the Shara range is Mount Lyuboten with an altitude of 8,230 feet. East of Berat and south of the Semeni river is the famous Mount Tomor, 7,861 feet in height. After passing Petrela, which is about ten miles from Tirana, one begins the long pull up to the summit of the Krraba Pass, which is one of the highest in Albania. From this point the Tomori and Krrab peaks, 7,861 feet and 7,933 feet respectively, stand out clearly. Krrab mountain is in the direction of Dibra (Dibër). From Cape Linguetta at the Bay of Valona to the south, there rises a range of peaks whose summits reach over 6,500 feet. Naturally this territory as far as the Gulf of Arta belongs to Albania by right.

ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

- 133 The extensive basin-shaped plains of eastern Albania—especially the plain of Metova in the upper region of the White Drin Valley, and the plains of Kosova and Tetova—are important to Albania. There are many lakes in these regions.
- 463 Agriculture and cattle raising are the principal occupations, with olives, the making of
241 olive oil, grains and tobacco being the prin-
135 cipal products of the country. But there is great mineral wealth (asphalt, arsenic, copper, iron, lead, lignite, naphtha, oil, and other mineral resources), which is largely yet undeveloped, and with time, possibly a very short time, through the development of the great abundance of these natural resources, including the fisheries, they will become the principal resources of the country.

AN INTIMATE GLIMPSE INTO ALBANIA

cries of the street vendors. The nights, even during the summer, are delightfully cool and enjoyable; sitting in one of the comfortable café gardens of Tirana with a cup of delicious coffee! The old saying of "being killed with kindness" is literally true in this unique kingdom. 000 275

Upon leaving Tirana, the capital of Albania, and journeying further into the heart of the country, one comes more in contact with the native aspect of this country in all of its charm. The land, in the vicinity of Tirana, is smooth and devoted to wide, rich fields of maize and wheat. A few miles further on the landscape loses its cultivated appearance and the scenery becomes more wild and desolate, and at the same time extraordinarily beautiful. From plains the country rapidly rises into rolling hills and rugged rocky mountains, and becomes a country from Wonderland. 153 311

The first point of interest along this route are the ruins of the Petrela Castle, which dominated this district until the rise of Tirana about 1600. However, fragments of tile proclaim the fact that it was built for fortifying purposes in ancient times, but the more evident pro-Turkish brick and stone mortar de- 712

ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

7/2 cisively date its construction in the early fifteenth century, as well as being frequently mentioned in the old histories of Scanderbeg the Great. Even to-day this point has not lost its strategic value as is proven by the trenches dug during the world war. Directly beneath these magnificent old ruins, a half-deserted village still holds its weekly bazaars—a strange contrast of the unceasing incongruity between the old and the new.

346 At this point are also four monasteries of dervishes: two Khalveti, one Rifai and one Hajati. The surrounding slopes are ablaze with irises during April, making a colorful and dainty setting for such severe buildings.

● 133 As the solidly-built road twists and turns up the majestic sides of the Krraba Pass, magnificent gorges, which form the head of the valley and which were cut in the course of the ages by winter torrents, come into view. At the summit of this mighty pass, eight hundred metres above sea-level and eighteen miles from Tirana, it is possible to gain a glimpse, on a clear day, of Durazzo (Durrës) and the Adriatic Sea. After having reached the top, the road, a result of much blasting, travels along the ridge of the mountains for some dis-

AN INTIMATE GLIMPSE INTO ALBANIA

- 133 tance. On one side the rocks rise sheer and uncovered and on the other a deep precipice drops directly downward into seemingly bottomless depths. Only here and there a few farms dot the landscape. The trees at this altitude are small oaks, with very grotesque appearance because of the absence of many branches, but this is explained by the fact that the poorer peasants cut them off and store them as winter fodder for their animals.

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231 133 Gradually, glimpses can be caught of the immense fertile plain of Elbasan, with the River Shkumbi dividing it like a sharp, silver knife, and on one side of this magnificent range of mountains, rich in the shades of green and brown, roll away to the west. Just before beginning the descent from this ridge one should note that to the southward in this mighty range are to be found the two highest peaks of Albania: Krrab and Tomori. Krrab, 2,418 meters (7,933 feet), is really the higher, but it is the popular belief that "Father Tomori," 2,396 meters (7,861 feet), is the more lofty due to surrounding low hills. These twin peaks are accessible about five or six months out of the year, being entirely inaccessible on account of snow during the winter months.

AN INTIMATE GLIMPSE INTO ALBANIA

000 with their dusky green leaves and snarled old roots and trunks, to the grey, white and sun-baked shades of the dreamy little town, and all this set like a tiny little drop on the vast, fertile plain.

132 Elbasan is well-known for its great variety of products, made possible by the rich soil of the plain. The town, sheltered by the immense old wall, enjoys a somewhat hot-house atmosphere, for which it should indeed be grateful, for it becomes terrifically cold during the winter months when the east winds sweep over it from the mountains of

• 133 Librazhd. These great monarchs, snow-crowned ten months of the year, which surround the plain are very cool even in August, making them delightful resorts from the heat of the plain.

241 This district is versatile in that it can produce, in this dual atmosphere, both the products of the north and the south. There is an abundance of cotton, rice and tobacco, as

245 well as maize, barley and wheat. And unlike many of its neighbors, it has its own figs, grapes, melons, oranges, lemons and olives growing on the plain, and apples, pears, raspberries and various other northern fruits mellowing into ripeness on the mountains

p. 123 surrounding Elbasan.

ALBANIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY

000 found Albania to give them their hearts' desire.

What other country, besides Albania, can offer to the pleasure-seeker a combination of the warm waters of the Adriatic lazily lapping away the hours on dazzling white sand, and the tall, majestic, cloud-tipped mountains, an extremity of the Alps, just in the background? But of more interest to the traveller are the natural and picturesque little towns, now perched loftily on a mountain shoulder, now snuggled dreamily in a cozy green valley, all abounding in a wealth of native folklore and tradition that is as original and unique as the little towns themselves. To seek out their quaint old houses, to visit the shrines of past glories, to explore the massive fortifications and monuments will give the sensation of having stepped into a hidden treasure house.

- 133 In Albania a range of the Alps raise their proud heads as high as 8,500 feet to the sun, towering over their surroundings like veritable monarchs of the earth, which would easily lead one to imagine that the natives of these lofty regions are either sun-worshippers or imitators of that lonely bird which frequents

TOURISTIC

- /35 their heights—the Eagle; and the latter guess would be the true index to the character of the inhabitants—courageous, strong and enduring. These mountains, covered with stately pinewoods and beautiful forests of beeches and olives many hundreds of years old, are often cut into deep, mysterious gorges and lovely green valleys which lend their soft, rich and dark colors to make a picture worthy of the talents of a master.
- [137]

The natural geography of Central Albania is that of littoral plains, imperceptibly changing into smooth hills with dense oakwoods, which encircle and hold as precious secrets many wide and fertile basins. These rolling hills further to the south, heighten into mountains of unusual grandeur, intersected with wooded ravines and sheer precipices. For those who are irresistibly attracted by the invading charms of the solitary plains, the typical character of the Karst of these higher regions holds a peculiar fascination; also the lonely splendor of the bare, rocky, limestone cliffs and summits, haunted by the mountain eagle.

489 Transportation in Albania is of the pleasantest sort—by air, by automobile or by

CHAPTER VIII.

ALBANIAN WOMEN: THEIR STATUS AND OCCUPATIONS.

- 121 As the character of a people is generally so much influenced by the nature of the country they inhabit, a brief description of the division of Turkey occupied by the Albanians may give greater interest to my
- 101 remarks on this race. Albania, as its native name of *Skiperi*, "The Land of Rocks," signifies, is one of the most mountainous divisions of Turkey. The principal
- 133 chain runs north and south, parallel with the Adriatic, and from it jut many spurs, composed of mountains as lofty as the main range, which ramify in every direction, so that almost the whole surface of the country is covered with rugged hills and deep valleys, save near the mouth of the river Ergenth. Even the coast is grandly mountainous, the spurs there often terminating in abrupt precipices, the sides of which are eternally beaten by the lashing waves.
- 132 Almost every variety of climate is found within the limits of Albania. In the south, and near the coast, the temperature is as mild as at Naples, and oranges, citrons, grapes, pomegranates, figs, and other fruits grow in abundance. But the cold increases with the distance from the sea, and only twenty
- [137] miles from the Adriatic the snowfalls are heavy, and the frosts severe. The higher and more northern

PEAKS OF SHALA

shrill, high notes, like nothing human I had ever 000 heard. Frances Hardy, lying almost perpendicular along her pony's back, her chin on what would have been the saddle pommel had there been one, looked downward at me, similarly extended.

"They're making a song to the Chafa Bishkasit, the Road of the Mountaineers," she said. "That's the Chafa up there. We're going over it to-day, and then we'll be in the mountains. Aren't you happy?"

I could find no word emphatic enough for reply as I gazed up at the tiny notch in a wave of snow-crest that curled against the sky five thousand feet above us.

The sun swung to its highest and sank again while we climbed. It was low in the sky—it¹³³ seemed on a level with us—when we made the last interminable hundred yards up into the Chafa Bishkasit. We were in the sky; there is no other way to say it, and no way in which to describe that sensation of infinite airiness. Forty miles behind and below us Lake Scutari lay flat, like a pool of mercury on a gray-brown floor. At each side of our little gay-colored cavalcade a gray cliff rose perhaps two hundred feet, too sheer to hold the snow that thickly crusted its top. These cliffs were the posts of a gateway through which we looked into the country of the hidden tribes.

I had never seen or dreamed such mountains. Like thin, sharp rocks stood on edge, they cov-

PEAKS OF SHALA

● 133 ered hundreds of miles with every variation of light and shadow, and we looked across their tops to a far-away wave of snow that broke high against the sky. The depths between the mountains were hazy blue; out of the blueness sharp cliffs and huge flat slopes of rock thrust upward, streaked with the rose and purple and Chinese green of decomposing shale, and from their tops a thousand streams poured downward, threading them with silver white. A low, continuous murmur rose to us—the sound of innumerable waterfalls, softened by immeasurable distances.

202 Suddenly, clear and very far and thin, a call came out of the spaces.¹ It was like a fife, and yet not like it. Instantly our guides were still, attentive. A moment of silence, and farther and thinner, hardly to be heard above the beating of blood in our ears, there was an answer. Then the first note began again and went on and on; there seemed to be a pattern to it, not a tune—words? I looked at the others.

Rrok Perolli was motionless, a cigarette between his lips, his hand arrested in the act of striking a match. Little Rexh, his round face intent beneath the red fez, his mouth slightly open, his eyes wide and blank, was an image of concentrated listening. The two gendarmes stood alert, like dogs straining at a leash, scenting something. Our four guides, in their long white trousers, black jackets, colored turbans and sashes, were like men frozen in attitudes of interrupted talk.

¹[In chapt. Bishkasit Mountains [8] of Albania -- Analysis]



THE CHAPA BISHKASIT
The "Road of the Mountaineer"—the gateway to the northern lands.

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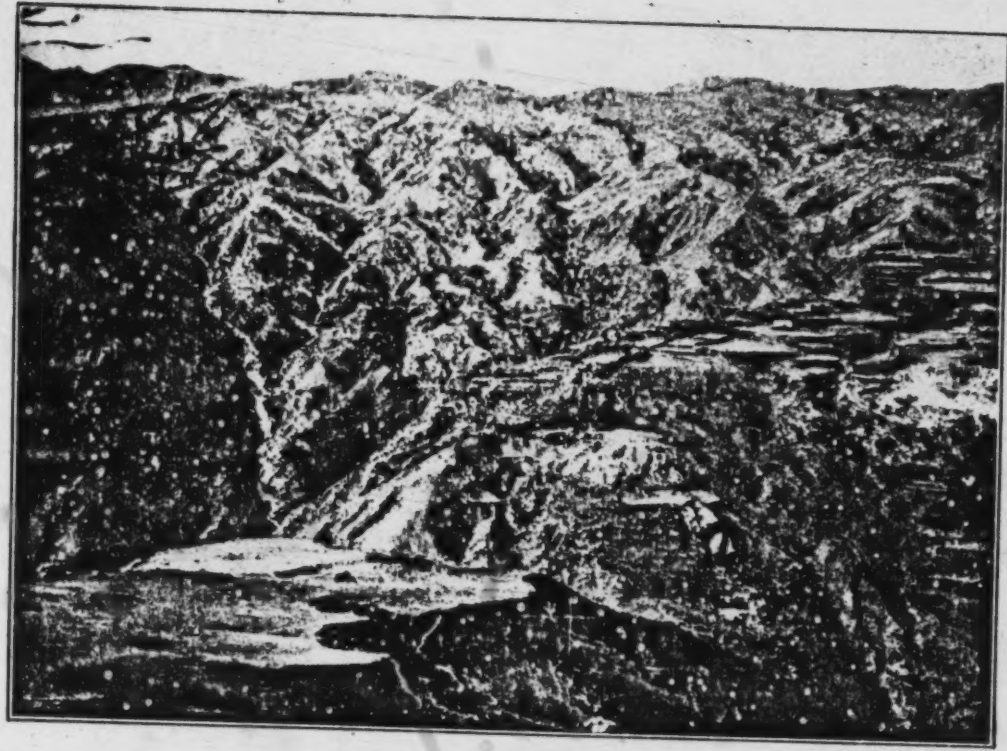
THE PLATEAU OF THETHIS

In the foreground the church, etc. The hills in the background are held by the Serbs.

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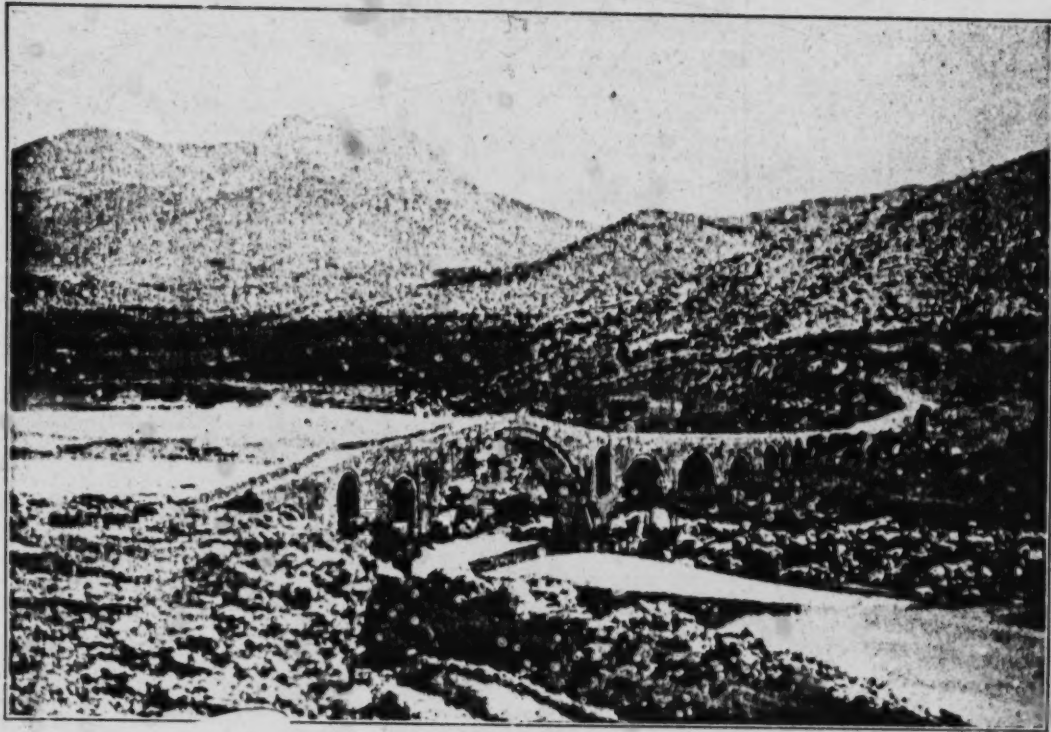


THE SHALA VALLEYS

[1340]

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THE KIRI BRIDGE

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POSTSCRIPT

[492] winding road to Shijak, the village by the river
491 where the bridge begins and ends in willow groves.

- [133] Beyond Shijak the road goes over the last low hill, and twenty miles of plain lie before it, most sparsely dotted with the great white houses of the beys of central Albania. Against the eastern sky the towering mountains, with their eternal smoke of clouds, catch the last rays of the sun and make magic with it. For an hour the colors shift and change, plum purple, orange gold, mauve and violet and sea green, until at last only a pale gold moon and a silvery star shine in a lemon-yellow sky. And the seven white minarets of Tirana lift above the green of trees.

342 Dusk was on the plain, and lights were glimmering through little houses here and there, when we came to Tirana. No, the lights do not glimmer through windows; these houses of peasants on the great estates have no windows, as they have no chimneys. The light of the evening fire, built on the earthen floor, shines through walls woven of willow withes, and the smoke seeps through thatched roofs.

373 Before us twinkled the street lamps of Tirana. These are literally lamps, filled every day with kerosene and set on their poles, to be lighted with a match after the evening call to prayer from the minarets. Our little car passed between low, ghostly white walls, and stopped before the gendarmerie. An officer came out, lifted one of the street lamps from its pole and held it over the car door, the better to see us.

POSTSCRIPT

tained their independence for six centuries within ¹⁸⁴
the Turkish Empire look with distrust and con-⁵⁷⁸
tempt on the Toshks whose valleys have been
flooded by every wave of invaders. The Toshks,
who are the educated men of Albania, and the
travelers, are equally contemptuous of the
Ghegs, ignorant men unable to read or write.
Nor do the Toshks admit that they cannot fight
as well as the Ghegs. It was the Toshks in Sicily
who fought with Garibaldi, the Toshks of Egypt
who fought with Mehmet Ali; the Albanian sol-
diers in Russia and Rumania and Turkey are
Toshk; the 50,000 Albanians in the United
States are Toshk, and fought well with the
Americans in France. Hundreds of them have
returned to spread American ideas through the
south; there are Toshk villages in which Ameri-
can English is spoken by nearly every child.
Men from these villagers led the forces that
drove the Italians from Valona in 1920. Indeed,
say the Toshks, they can fight as well as Ghegs.
But it is not fighting that Albania needs.

One of the errors about Albania, to which I ¹³³
fear my descriptions may contribute is the
belief that the country is entirely mountainous.
This is true of the northern part, adjoining
Montenegro. Farther south the ranges are like
the partitions in a house; steep, high, almost
impassable, they surround valleys and plateaus
of rich level land, much of it irrigated. The ¹³²
climate of the valleys is semitropical; rice, cot-²⁴¹
ton, tobacco, citrus fruits, figs, and pomegranates

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Sons of the Eagle

The Straits of Otranto, where the waters of the Adriatic merge into the main basin of the Mediterranean, divide the Apulian heel of Italy from the land of Albania — the setting of my tale. The Italian shore is flat, featureless, and without a considerable harbour; but on the Albanian side the coastal range of the Dinaric Alps curves back from the sea, as if to protect the mainland approaches to the port of Valona, which lies where the straits are narrowest. Albania is thus a fortified enclave on the west coast of the Balkan Peninsula, and the Power that controls it commands the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. This enclave, moreover, forms a natural bridgehead for Italy in the Balkans: from Valona to Salonika is but two hundred miles; and, though the mountains of the interior present notable obstacles to communications, a Power established across this neck of the peninsula would command two of the three key positions on the roads that lead from Europe to the East.

175 The fate of a territory of such strategic importance could scarcely be a matter of indifference to the Powers; and the briefest review of Albania's past suggests that it has been an enduring cause of contention between them in their efforts to acquire or to preserve a dominant position in the Adriatic or the Eastern Mediterranean. The rising sea power of Rome clashed with the navies of Illyria and Epirus, and subjected those kingdoms to her rule, in order to confirm her supremacy in the Adriatic. Once the control of the straits was assured, the new provinces were converted into a base for imperial expansion; and Dyrrachium, the modern Durazzo, became the head of the Via Egnatia, the great artery of empire which ran through Thessalonika (Salonika) to the East. Rome's Byzantine successor held fast to the Albanian coasts to preserve the Eastern Mediterranean from Adriatic enemies, until Norman sea power supplanted her there, and gave the land its present name. In the wake of the Normans came armies of Crusaders, who crossed from Italy into Albania to follow the ancient Roman road to the East. The ephemeral empires of Bulgaria and Serbia spread, in their turn, to control the entrance to the Adriatic, while the more enduring mercantile power of Venice long strove, and with varying success, to establish itself on the

Introduction

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people, too, had their part, for they formed the permanent garrison of the key to the Adriatic. Once again, as so often in the past, the rival nations vied with one another to secure the friendship or compel the obedience of the Albanians; and they, owning no common allegiance, took sides and changed them in accordance with the dictates of interest and the counsels of opportunity. Thus the situation in Albania came to reflect, as in a mirror, the true relations between the Powers, obscured to the general view by the smoke of battle blown before the wind of words. ○○○

The policies of nations devolve in the last instance upon individuals; and in this, as in past struggles, lone men went out among the Albanian mountaineers to make their local feuds subserve the divergent and often inconsistent purposes of the strategists and statesmen who had sent them forth. Of these men I was one; and of a part of what I saw this is the tale.

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THE Albanians are a distinct people, not perhaps a nation, but remarkable by the strength of their sense of nationality. Archaeologists believe the two main branches of their race — the Ghegs and Tosks, whom the river Shkumbi divides — to be descended from the ancient Illyrians and Pelasgians. These peoples, perhaps the earliest Aryan invaders of the Balkans, may once have inhabited the whole region between the Danube and the Aegean and Adriatic seas; but successive waves of invasion have worn them down by assimilation or massacre, and only a remnant survive in the land known as Albania. [181]

This land, the exact boundaries of which have fluctuated with the fortunes of the Albanians and their conquerors, forms a wedge between the massif of Montenegro and the Pindus range. It consists of a rich but malarial coastal plain, in which lie the two harbours of Durazzo and Valona, and a mountainous interior; an extension of the Dinaric Alps. In contrast, however, to the bare and arid Karst of Dalmatia, the Albanian mountains are thickly wooded and convulsed out of their former [33] ●

133 symmetry into a tangle of high and broken ranges. The valleys they enclose are narrow but fertile, and from them powerful streams pursue their twisted courses down to the Adriatic.

361 Albania has many times been overrun in the strife of empires for the control of the Straits of Otranto; and it is in the almost inaccessible fastnesses of the interior rather than in the rich coastal plain that the remnant of the Illyrians have made their homes. There they have found freedom; for, so wild and rugged are the mountains, and so poor the prospect of wealth which they offer, that none of Albania's conquerors have attempted to rule them except in name.

To this day the majority of the Albanians live in the mountains; but at different times — when the growth of population in the highlands has pressed too hard upon the means of subsistence, or when political conditions have been favourable — families have moved down to the plains or to the towns. Thus, in the seventeenth century, under the protection of Islam, the tribesmen of the North flowed back into the Kossovo. But [181] the trend has been a slow one; for the Albanians prize freedom above all else, and many that have descended to the plains have returned again to the mountains. The plains are rich, but, as the malaria saps a man's strength, so work on the big estates destroys his independence, and submission to the laws of the conqueror corrupts his soul. Thus the lowlands have ever been the province of the foreign overlord, and it is in the mountains, beyond the reach of invaders and guarded by the armed might of the clans, that the moral and material strength of Albania resides.

642 The steep and rugged mountains, the deep and pathless forests, the drifts of snow in winter, and the spate of the rivers in spring and autumn have preserved the Albanians from foreign conquerors. But these obstacles to communications, which have so often turned back hostile armies, have operated powerfully against the growth of a centralised Albanian state. Geography has thus combined with contending foreign Powers to promote disunity among the Albanians. The ancient Illyrian and Pelasgian kingdoms were seldom even allied, and, under the Turkish Empire, the country was divided for political and

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THE PLATEAU AT BIZA, WHERE WE LANDED $\frac{1}{\Lambda}$

$\frac{1}{\Lambda}$ [cf. cat. 116, pp. 78-82 for details--Analyst]



ON THE WAY TO SHENGVERO $\frac{2}{\Lambda}$

[-68 b-] $\frac{2}{\Lambda}$ [cf. cat. 116, pp. 82-83 for description. Anal.]

Reconnaissance

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or compounded and, above all, what sides the clan should take in the strife of political factions. Tsen Lezi had long been a supporter of Abas Kupa and he received us well. 596

It was already May, but in the mountains we had still lived amid the gales and snow of winter. Next morning, however, as we descended from Tsen Lezi's house, we came out of the mists into the sunlight and saw the broad Mati valley spread out below us like a promised land. Fat sheep and cattle grazed in the undulating pastures; whitewashed houses, the tallest in Albania, were scattered over the low, wooded hills; and beyond the sparkling river the ground rose steeply to the wild glens of Mirdita. The guerillas had not left the mountains since autumn; and now, at the sight of the sunlit valley, the long line of men winding down the hillside broke into a strident song. Presently Abas Kupa called a halt and we sat down to refresh our eyes with the view. Hitherto I had always looked on mountains as holiday grounds; but the guerillas' song touched some atavistic chord in me and for the first time I experienced the weary highlander's longing for the plain. 133●

Mati was rich and populated, the region where the tribal system of the mountains mingled with the feudalism of the coastal plain. The land and flocks were still owned and worked in common by the different clans; but their chiefs were already known as *Beys*; and the wealthier among them employed hired labour and rented out some of their fields to poorer families. The men of Mati were reputed devout Moslems and, as is often the way of the pious, they lived well; renowned for their lavish hospitality and comfortably appointed houses. They had prospered especially under the monarchy; for King Zog was a man of Mati and his first care had been for the people of his valley. Many, though they could not read nor write, had been given appointments in the civil service; and, following the tradition of the Turks, Zog had conferred reserve commissions on most of the *Beys*. This was not indeed to compel them to military service, but to bind them more closely to his cause by the payment of an honourable and regular pension. The valley had benefited, moreover, from an ambitious programme of public works; a road and 101 643 [212] 653

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course of a torrent which broke through the eastern wall of the gorge. We went slowly, for the ascent was steep, and Muharrem inclined to frequent rests. "*Kadal, kadal*" — "Slowly, slowly" — was his oft-repeated maxim. Towards nine in the morning we at last emerged into the sunshine and followed a more gradual path to an isolated farmstead. There we stopped for the heat of the day and ate our midday meal of roast lamb and cheese in a shaded orchard, pink and white with blossom.

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We pressed on in the afternoon, and, climbing up wooded slopes too steep to ride, came out on to the grassy uplands of Teya, in parts still deep in snow. Teya is a plateau over eight thousand feet high, with stretches so broad and smooth that they might almost have made a landing-ground for aircraft. The day was cloudless and we turned aside from the path to scale a pyramid-shaped knoll for the view. There all Albania was spread out at our feet, convulsed into a chaos of broken valleys and intersecting ranges. To the north the wavy, jagged chain of the Albanian Alps rose to its climax in the tooth-like, snow-covered peak of Shkelzen; westwards the rolling highlands of Mirdita stretched towards the sea; to the east Korab towered immediately above us, shutting out the prospect of the Vardar valley; and in the south the snowy summit of Tomori hung above the haze. It took us nearly two hours to cross the plateau, and, climbing down five thousand feet beyond, we came towards dusk to Topoyan, a straggling village on the banks of the river Liuma from which the region draws its name.

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Next day, the 1st of June, we splashed across the Liuma and rode northwards along the crest of the range that rises from its eastern bank. The sun was scorching, and in the full noontide heat we reached the head of the gorge, whence the river broadens out across the plain of Kukes. From there we saw the junction of the Black with the White Drin, and, with the help of our glasses, studied the houses and bridges of Kukes with the white ribbon of road that runs through the town to Scutari. A mountain village was perched precariously above the gorge, and there we ate our midday meal in the company

★ [British liaison officers, Spring of 1944. — Analyst]

000 OUR meeting with Gani Kryeziu had taken us farther afield than we had at first intended ; it was already the 6th of June, and we were due back at base next day for talks with Abas Kupi. To return by the way we had come would take us more than a week ; but the only short cut — and this would take at least four days — lay through the wild highlands of Mirdita. This was the most primitive region in all Albania and firmly in the grip of Jon Marko Joni, the Captain of the Mirdites and the ally of the Germans. Gani and Muharrem begged us not to attempt the journey, and, when they saw that our minds were made up, offered to put a force of a hundred men at our disposal, so that, if necessary, we might fight our way through any opposition. To feed such a force, however, might well prove impossible, especially if the clansmen were hostile. We therefore determined to put our trust in speed rather than strength, hoping to be in Mati before Marko Joni learned that we had crossed Mirdita.

[622] We rested, therefore, through the morning and afternoon of the 6th June and, bidding Gani farewell, set out at sunset with Said and Muharrem Bairaktar. The nights are short at this season, but we planned to cross both the Great Drin and the Scutari-Kukes road before dawn. The river was too deep and swift to ford, and there was no alternative but to cross by the ferry. This was guarded, however, by a gendarmerie post under a new commandant, whose attitude was still unknown to the local chieftains. We reached the crossing about midnight and Muharrem deployed his men so as to surround the gendarmes. He then sent for the commandant and exhorted him as a patriotic Albanian to help our forces over the Drin. Intimidated by our array, and encouraged by a handful of gold, that officer soon discovered a vehement sympathy for the Allied cause ; the necessary orders were issued to the ferryman, and within half an hour our forces were across the river.

[133] An hour beyond the Drin our paths divided ; Muharrem turned eastwards on his way back to Liuma ; and the rest of

● 133



ON THE TRAIL BETWEEN LIUMA AND JAKOVA



ANOTHER VIEW BETWEEN LIUMA AND JAKOVA

[-164a-]

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FIG. 1. Northern Albania—the tribal area. (Stippled area symbolizes mountain and forest, unoccupied except as seasonal pasture and source of timber.) Scale, 1: 250,000.

33

The country of the Highland Ghegs is entirely mountainous. Although on the map its length is 75 miles and its width 55, these dimensions fail to convey the vertical distance. The trails go up and down and all around, climbing, twisting, and turning. In 1929 it took as long to go the length of the Gheg highlands by available means of travel as it did to cross the United States by rail. To an Albanian, Shala is as far from Dibra as, to an American, San Francisco is from Boston.

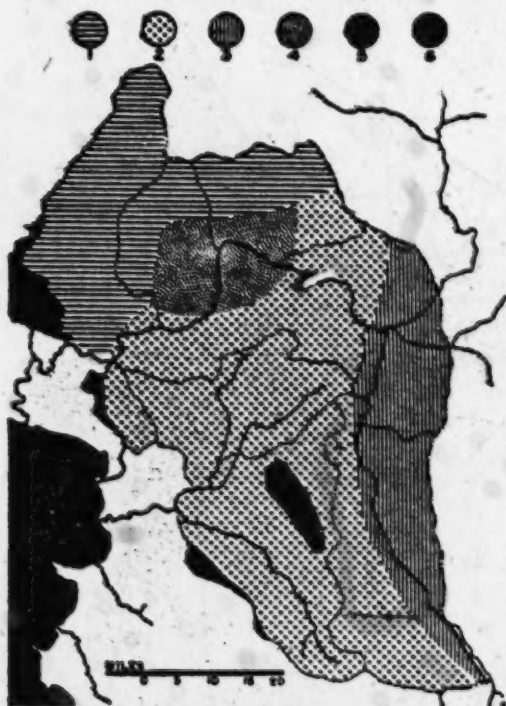


FIG. 2. Three main geological regions in Ghegania. 1—Mesozoic limestone; 2—Serpentine highland; 3—Metamorphosed Triassic and Upper Palaeozoic rocks; 4—Intense folding (Mesozoic-Eocene); 5—Tertiary basin; 6—Eocene flysch. (Almagia, 1932, pp. 464-73, map on p. 467, "after Nowack.")

A concentrated jumble of snow-covered peaks, rising to 7000- and 8000-foot heights, the mountains of Ghegania follow no simple system of parallel ranges and valleys, but instead form a knot through which the river Drin has cut a passage in its tumultuous journey from the plain of Kossovo to the Adriatic Sea. In the walls of the Drin gorge the travel-

133 er can see an impressive record of geological change—layer after layer of sedimentary rocks, twisted and upheaved like a slice of marble cake.

Although the systematic geology of this entire region remains to be studied, enough is known of it for our immediate purpose. Figure 2 shows 3 main geological regions in Ghegnia. The first is the Mesozoic limestone mountains of Malsia e Madhe and parts of Dukagin and Malsia e Jakovës. This is a continuation of the bare rocky landscape so characteristic of Montenegro, which, north of Lake Scutari, reaches the sea in a succession of drowned valleys, the greatest of which is the Gulf of Kotor. Here the topsoil is thin, while alluvium is almost lacking in the stream beds. No trees crown the slopes, white in summer and winter alike from the alternate exposure of lime and snow. In the bend of the Drin the smaller area of intense folding is likewise mostly limestone, covering part of Dukagin, the Nikaj- and Merturi sections of Malsia e Jakovës, and the Buxhon and Berisha *bairaks* (see p. 30) of Puka. In the country so far designated, most of which is north of the Drin, geological conditions resemble those found immediately north of the border.

The second zone is one of igneous rocks, composed mainly of serpentine and gabbro. This zone covers all of Mirdita, most of Zadrina, Mati, Puka, and Has, and parts of Dibra and Malsia e Jakovës. In this region limestone is so scarce that few people can afford to build stone houses, owing to the lack of mortar. From the dietary standpoint one must understand the importance of this contrast between the northern geological zone, where the water is permeated with lime, and the central, where it is lime-free. This takes on significance because all foods consumed are locally raised—the fodder, the grains, the milk, and the meat.

The third region is the eastern zone, including half of Has, all of Luma, and the greater part of Puka. This is composed of metamorphic Triassic and Upper Palaeozoic deposits, deeply eroded, with steep slopes and rich alluvial bottoms. From the dietary standpoint, it lies intermediate between the northern and the central regions.

Through these mountain masses, composed of different kinds of rocks laid down and up-

1[See Cat 11b, pp 8a and
35 c -- Analyst]

133 heaved at different periods, flow its 2 rivers and their tributaries. These are the Drin and the Mati. By studying them one can arrive most readily at a knowledge of the tribal geography of Ghegnia.

East of Kukës there are 2 Drins, White and Black. The White Drin carries off the water from the eastward slope of the Peia or Pesh region in Montenegro, then flows southward to the Albanian border, where it turns west. A short but swift confluent flows westward under the bridges and flourmills of the city of Prizren. The Black Drin is the outlet for Lake Ochrida, south of Gheg territory. It flows northward in a nearly straight line through the Dibra valley, past the towns of Big Dibra and Little Dibra (Peshkopia). As it flows northward the valley grows narrow, and in places becomes a gorge, which opens out again before the river reaches Kukës.

At Kukës the 2 branches meet. From this point on, the slope of the river bed is great, and the water rushes down, foaming and leaping, through its canyon-like channel until it reaches the lowlands, where it divides into 2 channels. One flows into Lake Scutari, which in turn empties into the sea. The other goes directly into the Adriatic. Except for the last few miles of its passage, the Drin is too swift for navigation. Its possibilities for hydro-electric power are great.

The other river, the Mati, flows into the sea a short distance south of Lesh. It drains the tribal lands of Mati, and most of Mirdita. It too is swift and unnavigable, and in winter and spring often impossible to ford.

133 101 These rivers and their watersheds form the usual boundaries between tribes. Dibra and Mati form the drainages of the Black Drin and Mati rivers, respectively; and the watershed between these rivers is their boundary. The White Drin, in Yugoslavia, is the boundary between Has and the lowland tribe of Podrima; in both countries it divides Has from Luma; and in Albania alone, the combined Drin divides Has from Puka, Malsia e Jakovës, from Puka, Dukagin from Puka, and Malsia e Madhe from Puka and Zadrime. The northern branch of the Mati, the Fan, which is in turn divided into the Little Fan and the Big Fan,

● 133 drains Mirdita, except for the *bairak* of Spaç,
101 the northwestern finger of which forms part
of the Drin system. With this same exception,
the watershed between the Drin and the 2 Fans
is the boundary between Puka and Mirdita.
The continuation of the watershed between
Mati and Dibra again separates, farther north,
Mirdita from Luma. Mati and Mirdita, and
Dibra and Luma east of the Black Drin, are
parted by deep valleys, running laterally, cut
on opposite sides of the river.

133 These rivers serve more often as tribal
boundaries than as routes of travel. Their
banks are so steep that the roads usually follow
the crests and shoulders of the mountains, only
dipping down into the valleys where it is
necessary to cross them. Their waters are so
swift that only in rare spots can they be nav-
igated. All in all, they are barriers to travel
and communication.

132 It is a rule long known to geographers that
in the Mediterranean basin, lands lying on the
western slopes of peripheral land masses re-
ceive more rain than those on the east.² The
higher the mountains flanking the coast, the
more the rain. Ghegnia and Montenegro have
the heaviest rainfall of any Mediterranean
countries. The Adriatic coast, from Lesh up
to Dubrovnik, receives well over 60 inches of
rain a year; and all of Ghegnia, back from the
coast, gets between 60 and 40 inches, with the
total decreasing to the east.

This is not all winter rain. It may rain any
month of the year, and the summer rainfall
totals anywhere from 4 to 8 inches, enough to
permit the cultivation of maize by dry farm-
ing. This fact alone takes the Gheg highlands
out of the Mediterranean climate area. The
winter rain, which begins to fall in September,
becomes snow at the higher altitudes. Only in
the highest valleys and on the peaks does it
last out the winter. Elsewhere a succession of
snowfalls and thaws renders this region as un-
pleasant as New England in early spring.

The temperature again prohibits the growth
of many Mediterranean crops, such as the fig
and olive, which soon disappear as one leaves
the coast. All of the uplands receive severe
winter frosts, and on the border of the Kos-
sovo plain the climate becomes continental.

133

Too little is known about the soils of northern Albania to permit a detailed study of their relationship to physique, but we can find to what extent pertinent anthropological features fit the geological picture. The latter has already been described in chapter 2, "Land of the Highland Ghegs,"¹ and the principal geological areas blocked out, after Almagià on figure 2.²

The Mesozoic limestone of Malsia e Madhe, Shala, and Malsia e Jakovës is a southern continuation of the barren karst of Montenegro. Although it is a poor country for farming, and much of it is good only for grazing goats, the people on both sides of the border, though often hungry, are large and heavy boned. The serpentine highland zone, in contrast, which runs all the way from eastern Malsia e Madhe across most of Puka, all of Mirdita, and parts of Zadrina, Mati, and Dibra, is in places forested. The soil is reminiscent of that seen on certain worn-out farms of northern New England. The eastern zone of Metamorphosed Triassic and Upper Palaeozoic rocks supports open meadows and brown-soiled fields, with forests on the slopes and clumps of poplars around the villages.

These are the 3 principal geological areas. To them may be added the area of intense folding of Mesozoic-Eocene strata, along both sides of the Drin in Shoshi, Nikaj, and the northern villages of Puka. The traveler walking along the Roman road can see where the river has cut sections through the strata in several places, revealing contorted patterns, including one in the shape of a figure S. In north-central Mati a cap of tertiary limestone breaks the continuity of the gabbro. No village is situated directly over it, but the goats and cattle from several villages are driven onto it for summer grazing, and the villagers drink their milk and eat their flesh. Finally, a small slice of the tillage land of Zadrina is included in the so-called Dalmato-Montenegrin num-

¹ Stiles, 1946.

² Howard, 1947.

³ Almagià, 1932, map on p. 467.

¹[See cat. 116, pp. 76-106 -- Analyst]

²[See cat. 116, p. 8a -- Analyst]

[p. 86 (b)]

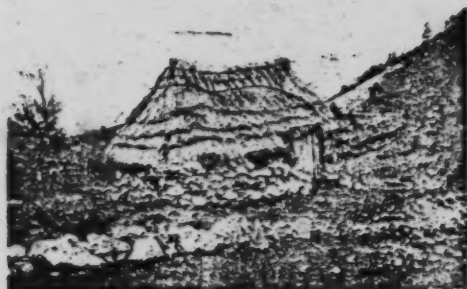
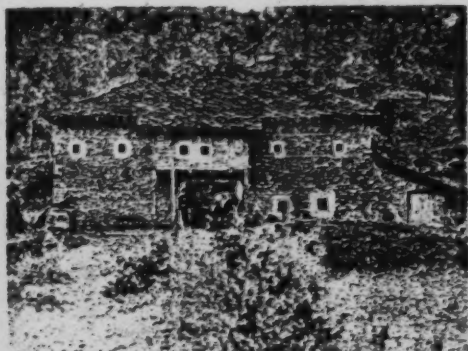
● 133 mulithic limestone and flysch, extending southward from the isthmus between Lake Scutari and the Adriatic.

These 6 areas correspond roughly to the tribal divisions, but some of the geological boundaries cut across tribes. From the tribal data alone a close relationship between geology and physique is suggested; if we reseriate by geological areas, ignoring tribal affiliations, we can test this more accurately.

SOIL AND PHYSIQUE IN MALSIA E GHEGNISE

*128
133 Samples for each of the 3 major areas and the area of folding range in size from 126 to 354 individuals. To the flysch section of Zadrima, 41 men can be assigned. Only in the small limestone region of Mati is the sample, 13, statistically inadequate. In table 21 the means for these 6 tribal samples in 12 pertinent measurements are given. In general, they repeat the picture shown by tribal distribution, and in certain respects accentuate it. When we compare the first 5, making 15 comparisons for 12 characters, we find 65 out of a possible 180 differences significant, or 36 per cent; 28, or 16 per cent, are more than 6.00 times p.e.; 14, or 8 per cent, over 8.00 times p.e.; and 6, or 3 per cent, over 10.00 times p.e. The means for the areas do not in themselves exceed tribal means, because the areas are spatially more inclusive than single tribes situated within them. They fall between the tribes and the total series in variability, as indicated on table 21 by values of σ . Each of the geological areas undoubtedly contains a number of small local enclaves, as Switzerland did during the last century. To find lower values for σ we would have to study these valleys, and the villages in them, one by one. Our sample is not large enough for such fragmentation.

128
141 The validity of the division of the total series into geological areas is most clearly shown by the figures on the third part of table 21, in which the stature means of the component segments of tribes falling in each geological area have been listed together. In every case but one, *the means of the segments of individual tribes diverge from each other in the directions of their areal means, and they resemble these areal means more closely than they do each other.*

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a, An isolated kulla, Spaq Anrak, Mirdita. b, A Puka kulla. c, Herder's hut, summer pasture. d, House in Shkoll.

CHAPTER I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

000 A book on the Unwritten Law of the Albanian mountains must needs begin with a short survey of Albanian geography. Without some knowledge of the fantastic physical features which have moulded the way of life of the mountaineers, it is difficult to understand that way of life and the Unwritten Law by which it has for many centuries been regulated.

133 The material used in this book was gathered in the northern half of the kingdom over which King Zog ruled until the Italians invaded Albania in 1939 and sent him into exile. This area, which includes all the country north of the River Shkumbî, stretches from the Adriatic Sea on the west to the Yugoslav frontier on the east. It consists of a narrow plain along the Adriatic coast and, inland, a vast complex of mountains. The coastal plain, from 5 to 25 miles in breadth, rises so gradually from the water's edge that when it ends it is not much more than 100 feet above sea-level. Low hills cut across it, dividing it into four compartments as separate as rooms in a house. The Plain of Zadrimë (*Fushë e Zadrimës*) in the north, between the towns of Shkodër (Scutari) and Lesh (Alessio), is 15 miles long by 3-6 miles broad. The next section, measuring 18 by 5 miles, extends from Lesh to Cape Rodoni (*Kep i Rodonit*), and the third centres in Durrës (Durazzo). The Myzeqe plains (*Fusha të Myzeqes*), which constitute the fourth 'compartment' between the Rivers Shkumbî and Devoll, are 37 miles long, over 25 miles wide in parts, and less than 6 miles wide in others.

The mountains are less easy to describe. Between the latitudes of Lesh and Durrës three great ranges run parallel to each other from north to south. The most westerly rises perpendicularly from the coastal plain, the most easterly forms the boundary between Albania and Yugoslavia, and the middle one separates the plateau of Mat from the plateau of Dibër. North of this central region, in north Albania proper, and to the south, in the district of Martanesh, no pattern can be discerned. The whole is a jumble of lofty ranges that strike off from each other at every conceivable angle. Those in north Albania throw up a multitude of peaks from their jagged

133 crests; numerous valleys lie between them, each surprisingly narrow and steep-sided, some 3000 feet deep, all watered by a winter, if not by a perennial, stream, and many branching off right and left into side-valleys. In the district of Martanesh the ranges are rounded in outline, the summits are spreading instead of steep and sharp, large tracts of ground are comparatively unbroken, and in place of the countless valleys and streamlets of the north there are only a few deep ravines, each with a river on its floor.

361 These geographical characteristics have influenced the tribal
 133 cleft which still survives in the population. The main valleys in the north, such as Shalë, Shkrel or Orosh, are each capable of supporting a small unit such as a tribe, but seldom more. Appropriately, then, each is inhabited by a single tribe, which jealously prevents strangers from settling in its territory. The broad spaces farther south, such as the plateaux of Mat and Dibër, or the heights of Martanesh and adjacent Çermenikë, can carry a much larger population, in which no one tribe could hope to maintain its racial integrity or its political supremacy. Consequently, they are non-tribal and peopled partly by indigenous families, partly, at least in the case of Mat and Dibër, by immigrants, all of whom came in small numbers and many within recent memory. To quote only one example of each type, the Kadije family of Lis in eastern Mat is indigenous, and its neighbours at Burgajet, the Zogolli family, are immigrants.

133 More than the forms of social grouping have been affected by the
 133 physical features of the country. The number and height of the mountains have made stock-raising as important as agriculture to Albanians. Both parts of the range that rises sheer as a wall and green with forests from the coastal plain are over 3000 feet high, that of Krujë to the north being 3280-3940 feet and that of Dajt, which forms so beautiful a feature of the scenery round Tirana (Tiranë), 5290 feet—nearly 900 feet more than Ben Nevis and 1720 feet more than Snowdon. The parallel range which bounds the plateau of Mat on the east runs southwards from Mt Nezhde in Lurë to Mt Dëjë and on to Mt Allaman at a height that is in few places below 5000 feet and is often above 6000 feet. The frontier range is still higher, composed as it is of Mt Gjalicë (8150 feet) and Mt Korab (9070 feet), the former in Lumë, the latter in Dibër. The topmost summits of the Martanesh area, Mt Kaptinë and Mt Lopë, are respectively 6145 and 6630 feet in height; the surrounding ranges average 5000 feet. As seen from Shkodër, the welter of

northern mountains begins modestly with ranges 2000-2600 feet above sea-level, surpasses 7000 feet in several peaks of Lower Shalë, and culminates in the Accursed Alps (*Bjeshkët e Nemuna*), where the close-set summits of Radohinë (8690 feet), Jezercë (8790 feet), Rosh (8270 feet) and Kolatë (8370 feet) wall off Yugoslavia from Upper Shalë in spectacular fashion. East of Shalë, the monster Peak of the Irons (*Majë e Hekuravë*, 8530 feet) divides the tribe of Mertur from the open plateau of Krasniqë. The passes across the mountains are often lofty and arduous. To take an extreme example, the only way from Shalë to Bogë, its western neighbour, is by the Sheep Track Pass, to the northern frontier by the Pejë Pass, and to Nikaj on the east by the Ndermajnë Pass, which are respectively 5900, 5600 and again 5600 feet above sea-level and take a day to traverse. It is self-evident that the tribesmen of Shalë have never seen much of their neighbours. Elsewhere geographical conditions are less formidable, yet generally severe enough to limit intercourse between communities. [33]

It is clear that agriculture and permanent habitations must stop far below the summits of many mountains, and that on the highest slopes there can be only summer grazing. Throughout the area as a whole, however, there is so much summer and winter grazing that many Albanians live entirely by pastoralism and many others combine it with their agriculture. In this connexion it is essential to remember the part played by the immense forests. These spread over the grim mountains as well as the plains, saving Albania from the desiccated look of Dalmatia and Greece, and making its scenery agreeable to the eye at all seasons. The forest trees are of many kinds, with a large proportion of evergreens. Since they grow at different levels according to their kinds, three zones, named the shrub, oak and beech, or pine zones after their predominating tree, have been distinguished.¹ [33]

Shrubs grow all over the plains near the coast and up to a height of 600 feet in exposed regions like Shkodër and Durrës and 1600 feet in sheltered spots like the gullies on Mt Dajt. They include tree heather, hornbeam, arbutus, wild olives, broom and the terrible Christ's Thorn (*Spina Cristi*), which, withered or green, tears the flesh so savagely with its spikes that it is popularly said all over the Near East to have been used for the Crown of Thorns. There is rough winter grazing among the shrubs, especially for

¹ See Gashi, *Shqipnija*, pp. 51-60.

233 number is limited only by the amount of winter grazing available, which small owners find, and have always found, in the oak zone. In Turkish times, when Albania and Macedonia were both Turkish provinces and had no customs barriers between them as they have now, large owners sought it on the roomy plain of Salonica. Since Albanian emancipation in 1912 they have been confined to the more meagre pastures on the seaward side of the coastal plain at home, a restriction which has entailed a considerable cutting down of their flocks and herds. Nevertheless, in 1936-7 taxes were paid [151] on 1,424,965 sheep, 773,969 goats, 144,763 cattle and 44,318 horses in the whole of Albania;¹ there are no separate figures for its northern half. Many more animals ran about the houses, unregistered and free of tax. For Albanians the importance of sheep lies, it should be noted, not only in their wool and meat [329] as in England, but in their milk and the butter and cheese made from it.

- 133 If only the coastal plain were more spacious, it would be 233 a perfect complement to the mountains for pastoralism on the grand scale. In the portion south of Lesh the rivers Drin, Mat and Ishm, entering the sea at points less than 6 miles apart, have created what is virtually one vast delta of mud and swamp, lush undergrowth, and trees that have come too quickly to maturity. Farther south, swamps of the same type cover much of the Plain of Durrës, and a great lagoon extends to the very outskirts of the town. Two more lagoons and a series of swamps mark the estuaries of the rivers Shkumbi and Seman on the coast of Myzeqe. More marshes and the lagoon of Kakarriq outline the course of the River Buenë in the north.

132 On the coast the average yearly rainfall is 39-47 inches, against 57 at Shkodër, 67 at Krujë and 72 at Pukë, an inland place 39 miles east of Shkodër. Albania is one of the wettest countries in Europe because so many of its ranges run from north to south and are high enough to intercept the rain-laden clouds that drift in from the west. The first rains fall in October when it is still hot on the coastal plain. The moisture and the heat combine to produce a luxuriant crop of new grass by the time that the sheep come down from the mountains.

- [137] This grass is found, not only in the hay meadows and swamps, but also, owing to the violence of the winter rains, on all the arable land.

¹ Gashi, *Shqipnija*, p. 117.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

7

land. A high proportion of the year's rainfall falls in November and March:¹

NOVEMBER	MARCH
Durrës 215 mm. (8.46 in.)	100 mm. (3.94 in.)
Shkodër 209 mm. (8.23 in.)	162 mm. (6.38 in.)
Krujë 337 mm. (13.27 in.)	157 mm. (6.18 in.)
Pukë 260 mm. (10.24 in.)	202 mm. (7.95 in.)

When a storm breaks over the mountains, every river and rivulet in the storm-swept area rises rapidly because the surface soil is seldom deep enough to retain much of the falling rain. In furious [33] spate the rivers rush steeply towards the sea and, as they near the coast, spread far beyond their banks, engulfing many acres of arable land, and enlarging the marshes and lagoons so that they engulf many more. Because of this flooding, wheat cannot be sown near the coast. If sown in autumn, the November floods would [24] wash it away, and after the March floods the ground does not dry in time for a spring sowing. Maize is, consequently, the only crop that can be raised. While awaiting its planting in late May, the fields lie fallow and grass-grown. The March floods are also responsible for the striking size and number of the hay meadows; much land never dries enough to grow even maize and must be left permanently under grass.

Climatically, too, the coastal plain dovetails into the high pastures. Whereas the mountains are deep in snow all winter, the temperature at the coast never falls quite to freezing-point. In January, the coldest month, the average recorded for Durrës and Valona (Vlonë) is respectively 47 and 48 degrees, with 40 and 41½ degrees at inland Shkodër and Tirana (Tiranë). Rain falls frequently and heavily, but unless a sudden rise in a river catches sheep unawares and sweeps them out to sea, neither animals nor shepherds come to much harm. By the end of May, when the rains cease, everything changes, and life near the swamps becomes intolerable for man and beast. Day temperatures rise swiftly towards their summer maximum of 86 degrees and the nights are hot, so that every movement is a burden. The dense vegetation of the swamps exudes odours as foetid as those in a tropical forest. Swarms of malaria-carrying mosquitoes emerge from the stagnant [36] pools to attack man; swarms of gadflies, more savage than any

¹ Gashi, *Shqipnija*, p. 49.

To the Land of the Eagle

- 133 *The opposite side of the valley—which appeared to be two or three miles in width—was bounded by a formidable chain of mountains still covered with snow in places unreached by the sun.*

361 It was evening before we came in sight of Argyrocastron itself. Rounding a bend of the road we suddenly had a fine view of the town, which occupies three parallel ridges of hill at right angles to the main range, the highest of the three topped by an immense old Turkish fortress, black, rugged, and forbidding. On a fourth, and smaller, ridge is a monastery with cypresses. I have seldom seen a town so finely situated or so impressive at first sight.

The lorry climbed the winding road on low gear and drew up in an open space or square among cafés crowded with people. Work was over for the day and the Argyrocastrians 485 were taking their ease. In a steep cobbled street beneath the fortress ramparts I found an inn. It was merely a pothouse and the accommodation was of the roughest. I secured a bedroom to myself, however—an unusual luxury in Albania, as I have already indicated. The ground floor, with a door opening on to the street, served as restaurant, bar, kitchen, larder, and general living-room. It was furnished with deal tables and benches. On the left of the door was a desk whereat the proprietor kept his accounts. 265 On the right was an enclosed counter with a long metal 485 tray containing lime, on which stood pots full of meat and vegetables slowly stewing. The tray was, in fact, a kind of fireless cooker. On a shelf below the tray were clean knives, forks and spoons, clean plates, and an enormous bowl of

To the Land of the Eagle

453 Italian Government to finance such a bank with a loan, and
457 the question of the acceptance or refusal of this offer was then being discussed by the Chamber. The offer was hedged in by conditions of which one I understood, was a requirement that in case of any default in repayment the Italian Government should be entitled to seize the Albanian customs. But it was difficult to get information upon the accuracy of which one could depend. In the end the Chamber did, I believe, accept the Italian offer, so that Albania now, presumably, has a bank, and Italy another large finger in the Albanian pie.

000 As I had been saved from the necessity of sleeping at the Hotel Metropole—thanks to the kind hospitality of my American friends—I was able to stay for some days in Koritza before moving on to the Lake of Ochrida. I wanted, if possible, to cross the lake by steamer and visit the town of [505] Ochrida and its celebrated monastery, and I was told that a steamer service ran there from Podgradetz, a lakeside village distant an hour and a half from Koritza by post lorry. So I booked a seat and departed.

- /33 On the afternoon of my arrival the lake was looking extremely beautiful—sky, water, and mountains mingling in a haze of turquoise and opal. But I found that it was always changing. The next day there were thunderstorms about and the surface of the lake was vivid green against a background of violet mountains half hidden in inky clouds. On the day after that the water was a deep blue, and the mountains were veiled in a soft grey mist. And so on, through infinite variations.

CHAPTER XIV

I leave Albania—Montenegro Once More—Pelim Tea—A Hold-up—More
Politics—Cettinje to Ragusa—Local Beauties—Barber's Shops—
The Austrian Riviera—The Mystery in the Church—Its Explanation
—Money's Worth.

SCUTARI is situated, according to the map, at the 361
head of Scutari Lake, and I had therefore expected
to find an esplanade or riva with houses facing the water.
Actually the lake cannot be seen from the town, and there is [504]
no waterfront except at Old Scutari, where a narrow inlet
accommodates a few fishing-boats and where there is a small
wharf. The reason for this became apparent when I left by
the lake steamer on my way home. The shore is merely
swamp, and the open water is approached by a tortuous
channel which winds for a considerable distance amongst
waterweeds, alder scrub and tall rushes. The lake at the [133]
Scutari end is, in fact, very shallow, and for a mile or so out
looks much more like grass than water.

The morning of my departure was cloudy and wet, and ○○○
owing to frequent rainstorms which obscured the view I
did not see the lake at its best. I was the only passenger
and had the little cabin to myself. Here I settled down,
and for lack of other occupation wrote up my journal which
was, as usual, several days in arrear. Some three hours
after our departure we anchored off the north-east shore of

Yugoslavia EF1 Albania EG1

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342
[367]

Settlements of the Vlachs are located in steep hillsides far away from the highways. The houses are large, have a number of rooms, and are two-story structures. They are rectangular and of stone; the higher the altitude the thicker the walls become. Windows are not very large, but all two-story buildings have a balcony on the second floor. When they consist of only one story the veranda is lacking (Capidan, 1941: 29-30). The floor plan of both stories consists of a central hall with side rooms. In winter the ground floor is used for habitation, in summer the upper story, although in large families both floors are occupied in summer and winter. Most daily activities take place in the hall of the ground floor. The side rooms there are generally for storage, and most of the sleeping rooms are on the top floor. One or two guest rooms may be present. (Capidan, 1941: 29-30).

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343

Farm Buildings. In the yard one finds the kolara, a long rectangular building made of wicker with a straw roof, used for sheep in winter. The circular chicken coop is likewise of wicker (fig. 38). The most important structure is the plumja, which is located close to the threshing floor and serves for the storage of straw and fodder. Fodder ones are made of wattle and daub and covered with straw; however, they are generally of the same construction as the house. They are one-story buildings and are found in all villages of southern Macedonia. While they may be located in the yard they usually form a group away from the houses (Milejević, 1921: 87-88).

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Buildings Outside the Village. In the mountains one finds groups of up to twenty shepherds' huts that form a hamlet, looking like beehives from afar. They have a diameter of 5-6 meters and are not higher than 3 meters. They are constructed of woven twigs or straw and plastered with mud. The walls are about 10-15 centimeters thick. The upper part of the "bee-hive" has a roof consisting of about 5-7 rows of straw which merge with the walls. In the interior one finds a fireplace with a cauldron hanging over it, and a loom (Capidan, 1941: 31-32).

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In addition to these huts the Vlach shepherds have portable tents. The tent is made by spreading a cloth of woven goat hair, 4-5 meters long and 2-3 meters wide, over a wooden frame. One of the triangular entrances remains open while the other is closed by woven cloth (Capidan, 1941: 32-33).

ALBANIA

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133
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341
598

Albania consists largely of rugged, barren mountains, bordered by a fairly wide coastal plain. Most of the available data deal with the mountain regions of northern Albania. This is an area of intensive feuding, where, as among the Spasi clan, up to 32% of mortalities are the result of feuds (Nopcea, 1925: 52). This internecine warfare is clearly reflected in the preference for stone

ALBANIA EG1

buildings, fortress-like structure and small windows. House types thus serve as a clear index to the amount of feuding in any particular area. Where veranda houses prevail, conditions are fairly peaceful. This factor explains the almost mutually exclusive distribution of kulas and veranda houses in mountain areas, although how far this is borne out in lowland areas, I am unable to say.

Location and Types of Settlements. In the mountain regions west of Lake Scutari to Lake Ohrid one finds single farmsteads comprising one or two buildings. Only in the plains and at the foot of the mountains does one find Cvijic's Ibar type of settlements (Nopcea, 1925: 6). This type is characterized by widely spaced, dense hamlets (Cvijic, 1918: 219). In southern Albania the village form is variable but agglomerated villages with crisscrossed roads predominate (Cvijic, 1925: 224, Map IV).

House Types. Buildings of wickerwork and plaster are found only in the coastal plains, and even there they are rare (fig. 47). In the extreme north one finds houses of boards or logs. Most buildings are of stone; one finds some use of dry masonry, but generally mortar is used. Stone is preferred because it gives protection from fire and gunshot. In south and central Albania bond timbers are inserted into the stone walls; this pattern is lacking in northern Albania. The combination of stone foundation and wooden second story, found in Serbia, Bosnia, Rumania and Siebenburgen is missing in Albania (Nopcea, 1925: 30).

Roofing may be of straw, shingles, slate, stone slabs or tiles. The simplest buildings in the mountains have roofs of corn stalks. Tiles are common both in the coastal and mountain regions. Roofing of stone slabs is widely distributed; most dairy houses in the high mountains are covered in this manner (Nopcea, 1925: 31-32). High shingled roofs, common in Bosnia and eastern Montenegro, are found only in the extreme north of Albania. Gabled roofs predominate north of the Drin River; south of it one finds hipped roofs. Widely projecting eaves are absent. The kulas may have low pyramidal roofs and occasionally desk roofs. In general, roofs tend to be flat. When the roof is hipped, the chimney tends to be in the center of the short side (Nopcea, 1925: 31-32). Chimneys are not typical.

The simplest type of house is the one-room log house with a low roof of short thick shingles. Cracks in the wall are stuffed with moss; windows are lacking, and light enters through the open door and openings in the roof. The open fireplace has hung over it a deflector of boards plastered with mud; smoke escapes through the roof (Nopcea, 1925: 33).

In the coastal regions of northern Albania, reed is abundant and walls are made of woven reeds. The roof is likewise of reeds. These buildings are generally plastered on the outside. Occasionally the roof is of unfired bricks (Nopcea, 1925: 36).

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342
[114] consideration the remarks of all other previous investigators, especially those of J. Von Hahn⁽¹⁾ and A. Haberlandt⁽²⁾.

According to Nopcsa, the social status existing in Albania which, as Haberlandt remarked, has not changed since the medieval years, the lack of security, frequent revolutions and the systematic burning by the Turkish army of the houses of the fugitives from justice, contributed, before 1900, in bringing the housing situation to a very low level. Inhabitants of some mountainous regions of Albania (Sala-Kastrati), have stated that any relatively high buildings were considered as a novelty introduced into the country only before sixty years. According to Nopcsa, before the introduction of the two-storey house with a prostoon and of the Kula, the Albanians, who live in mountainous regions, the two-thirds of the country being at an altitude of over 1.000 meters, must have inhabited low huts, comprising one or two rooms at most and covered with hay or branches. Generally speaking, the evolution from the simpler forms of housing to the more composite ones has been very slow and toilsome in Albania, comparable to the slow process of Albanian civilisation.

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[127] Here below I shall try to consider the house of Northern Albania, studied by Nopcsa, and, as regards Middle Albania⁽³⁾, I shall only refer to the little but verified information we have from von Hahn and Ekrem bei Vlora⁽⁴⁾.

According to Nopcsa, we distinguish in Albania a) houses of temporary or semi-temporary and permanent character, and b) houses built of timber, of other organic material and of stone.

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[342] In Northern Albania we first see the most primitive forms of housing, such as the cave dwellings of the Cem valley with the Cruda tribe, which entirely correspond to the prehistoric shelters. Caves formed at the ends of the valley, were enclosed by stone

1) J. O. von Hahn, Albanische Studien. Jena 1853/54.

2) A. Haberlandt, Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Volkskunde von Montenegro, Albanien und Serbien. Zeitschrift für Oesterreichische Volkskunde, Ergänzungsband 23, Wien 1918 - Volkskunst der Balkanländer, Wien 1919.

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[171] 3) The area to the South of the Avlon gulf, as far as the Greek border is not examined in this book. This area is very wrongly referred to as Southern Albania in foreign surveys. The houses of this region are those of North Epirus and their building style is purely Greek.

4) Ekrem bei Vlora, Aus Berat und vom Tomor. Tagebuchblätter (Zur Kunde d. Balkanl. 13) Sarajevo 1911.